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C O N F I D E N T I A L THE HAGUE 000048

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SUBJECT: NETHERLANDS/CUBA: DUTCH HOPE FOR RESULTS FROM NEW  
COMMON APPROACH

REF: STATE 4900

Classified By: Acting Political Counselor Nathaniel Dean for reasons 1.  
4 (b) and (d).

1. (C) Although no longer in their EU Presidency role, the Dutch will not play spoiler but will continue to work for a consensus EU policy toward Cuba. This task is made difficult by the fact that there remains a wide range of opinions among EU partners, according to Jan Jaap Groenemeyer (MFA, Cuba Desk) with whom Poloff shared reftel points on January 10. Groenemeyer reported that the Netherlands delegation at the COLAT meeting in Brussels January 11 will join work on a draft Ministerial decision that, as expected, would relax the EU's current restrictive measures. The EU would then be "anxious to see results on the Cuba side," and they would give a six month deadline for positive Cuban actions. Groenemeyer promised to take reftel's new suggestions to the COLAT meeting and bring them to the attention of the Presidency. (Groenemeyer's boss, Marianne Kappeyen van de Coppello, MFA, Director of Western Hemisphere Affairs, had just returned to the office and would consider the USG suggestions before COLAT, he said.)

2. (C) Groenemeyer recalled that the December COLAT "was a very heavy meeting." It will be difficult for the EU to change the proposed policy too much now since it was a "real compromise of the widest range of points of view, which lay very far apart at the beginning." He added that "it is very clear that the EU needs a new Cuba policy" and "one that is united." Poloff retorted that "it is critical for the EU and the USG to be as united as possible on Cuba" and emphasized that we remained very skeptical about the changes the EU seemed about to adopt. Groenemeyer agreed the EU and USG should work together, while observing that EU and USG cooperation does not necessarily mean we would adopt exactly the same tactics or policies. He would expect the EU to be the softer foil to the USG's unchanging hard line. "If we are perceived as getting too close to the US then the Cubans put us back to zero," he said.

3. (C) Having held the Cuba account for almost eight years, he observed that staff changes among bureaucrats in Brussels and in national capitals regularly inspired so-called "fresh thinking" on Cuba, such as now, but "Cuba always seems to negatively surprise us." Still, the EU seems determined to move ahead on a new approach, he said. He noted that the Netherlands continues to represent the Presidency in Havana, where the EU will work on how to "fill out contacts with dissidents."

SOBEL